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## Secretary Says Shuttle Report Is Irresponsible

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Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger yesterday accused The Washington Post of "the height of journalistic irresponsibility" and said the newspaper may have given "aid and comfort to the enemy" by publishing a report about the space shuttle's secret mission next month.

Benjamin C. Bradlee, executive editor of The Post, said Weinberger's reaction was "not justified." Bradlee said virtually all of the information in the front-page report was already public and noted that Defense Department officials had given Congress more detailed information about the mission in public testimony.

The Post report yesterday said the shuttle flight, the first under military control, would be used to launch an intelligence satellite designed to eavesdrop on radio and other electronic signals in the Soviet Union. The satellite would relay information to a U.S. tracking station and could be used to monitor Soviet missile tests and verify compliance with arms control agreements, the report said.

The Post report appeared two days after the Air Force announced that strict secrecy would surround the shuttle mission. Air Force Brig. Gen. Richard F. Abel warned Monday that "speculation" about the shuttle's cargo might trigger investigations into the source of the information.

The secrecy represents a departure for the shuttle program, which under the civilian National Aeronautics and Space Administration has sought to keep reporters and the public fully informed. The new restrictions, and even tighter ones originally sought by the Air Force, led to friction between NASA and

the Air Force, which has control of military shuttle flights.

Air Force officials said the policy of secrecy is in line with their longstanding tradition of not describing the many military satellites that have been launched by Air Force rockets from Cape Canaveral and Vandenberg Air Force Base in California.

Several news organizations, including NBC News and the Associated Press, agreed several weeks ago after being called by Weinberger not to publish information about the shuttle's military cargo. Weinberger, who made his entreaties in the name of national security, had never made such a request in his four years as secretary, he said yesterday.

"I made the first calls I've ever made in my life asking someone not to run anything, and I hope I never have to do it again," Weinberger told The Post.

Weinberger had no advance knowledge of the Post report, officials said, and did not call The Post before its publication. Yesterday, he sharply criticized The Post for not withholding it, and he declined to confirm or deny the report about the mission.

"I can confirm only that it's the height of journalistic irresponsibility to violate requests that are made—these requests were made and responsibly honored by many networks, ABC, NBC, CBS, Associated Press," he said during an interview on Cable News Network. "The Washington Post felt that they simply had to run the story which a great many people had. They ran it with the typical, usual inaccuracies."

Asked whether the article endangered national security, Weinberger said he believes that it did.

"I think it is something that should not be discussed in the public prints," he said. "There are certain things that we have to do that we should do, that when they're published can only give aid and comfort to the enemy."

Bradlee said the report was published after "a careful review."

"We take it most seriously when anyone says that a story we printed breaches national security," he said. "We kept out of our story information we knew the Pentagon considered sensitive."

"Virtually every fact we mentioned is a matter of public record. The Pentagon itself, in public congressional testimony, has

gone into far greater detail about surveillance satellites than we did in our story," Bradlee said.

Last May, for instance, Robert S. Cooper, director of the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, testified about future shuttle payloads at an open session of the Senate Appropriations Committee. He

described the "Teal Ruby experiment," which he said was scheduled for shuttle launch and would operate in space for at least a year.

"Teal Ruby is a space-based experiment to evaluate infrared surveillance for the detection of aircraft targets against the earth's clutter background," he testified.

"In addition, Teal Ruby will provide proof-of-concept for other multi-mission surveillance functions, develop a comprehensive and global radiometric background data base and space-qualify first-generation advanced IR [infrared] sensor surveillance technology," he said.

The trade magazine Aviation Week and Space Technology reported Nov. 5 that the shuttle's first military cargo would be a "new heavy military satellite" that would be launched from the shuttle and propelled into an orbit that, in effect, keeps it stationary above one spot. The magazine suggested that the satellite would be for communication, missile early warning or electronic intelligence-radio intercept.

On Monday, CBS News reported that the cargo would be a "new generation of intelligence satellite."

Weinberger said the Aviation Week report was no ground for concluding that news about the military mission was no longer secret.

"The fact that someone puts out a rumor story," he told The Post, "is far different from when The Post reports it. It's just not comparable."

Bradlee said The Post withheld details about the satellite's capability that might not have been readily available to the Soviets and reported only general information widely available to defense experts. But Pentagon officials said they feared that publication of The Post story would spur other news organizations to publish more details.

"The Post broke the dam," said Michael I. Burch, assistant secretary of defense for

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public information. "Each one that follows now in this competitive business will try to add a little bit to it, and we don't know where this is going to end."

Burch also criticized the newspaper for making a judgment about what constitutes sensitive information.

"It's not up to the editor of The Washington Post to determine national security," he said. "That is done by a certain set of laws. The secretary of defense has responsibility for determining what's in the interests of the national security."

Bradlee said a Post reporter called Burch's office Tuesday but did not receive a return call. Burch said that his office has no record of such a call and that The Post should have made a greater effort to obtain a Pentagon reaction.

White House spokesman Larry Speakes said President Reagan believes that the information about the mission should not have been published but said he is not aware of any investigation to determine the source of the report. Other White House officials said the report did not cause great concern there.

Defense Department officials said they believe that the original sources of information about the mission for NBC News and the Associated Press were space agency officials at Cape Canaveral, perhaps because of what they termed NASA's frustration with Air Force secrecy rules. One official said the Federal Bureau of Investigation is investigating those "leaks."

Asked about possible investigations of reports about the shuttle mission, Burch said only that there is no investigation "by this building," meaning the Pentagon. A Justice Department spokesman declined to comment.

The Air Force plans to use the shuttle extensively during the next decade to launch satellites that previously would have been orbited aboard rockets and perhaps for other missions. The first such military shuttle flight is to lift off Jan. 23 from Cape Canaveral.

The Post report said the satellite to be launched then could weigh as much as 30,000 pounds, too large to be launched by an available U.S. rocket. The booster-assisted shuttle can launch a 65,000-pound cargo.

Originally, the Air Force wanted to keep almost everything about the flight secret, including names of the astronauts, all military officers, and to keep reporters from the launch site.

After negotiations with NASA, those rules were modified, but the precise launch time and much other information is to be kept secret.

The Associated Press reported yesterday that it had learned about the secret shuttle cargo in early December "from sources familiar with the mission." NBC News said it had prepared a report at about the same time.

Representatives of both said they were persuaded not to publish or broadcast their reports at the time by Weinberger. Burch said Weinberger "agonized" over his first such calls to the news media and interrupted a meeting with West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl to call several news executives.

The Associated Press said it agreed not to use the information as long as it remained unreported elsewhere. After The Post's first edition was published before midnight Tuesday, the Associated Press, citing The Post, issued its own report with some details not published by The Post.